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Letter dated 17 September 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

I am writing in reference to the statements made by the representatives of Eritrea and Kenya on Thursday, 16 September 2010, during the consideration of the report of the Secretary-General on the situation in Somalia (S/2010/447) by the Security Council at its 6386th meeting. During that meeting, both delegations made unfounded allegations that Eritrea is providing support to the Al-Shabaab group in Somalia. Ethiopia made a similar smear campaign in its media outlets recently, in which case the Eritrean Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded by issuing a press release on 15 September 2010 titled "Ethiopia: Endless Campaign of Disinformation", which I am attaching herewith (see annex). The timing and intent of this round of accusations against Eritrea is carefully orchestrated to misinform and wrongly influence Council members and the Somalia Monitoring Group that has been touring the Horn of Africa region as well as to cover up Ethiopia's renewed impending military intervention in Somalia.

Contrary to the defamation and unwarranted accusations stemming from all-too-obvious parties, Eritrea is not extending any form of support to any faction in Somalia. Eritrea remains open to engaging with all concerned partners and parties to achieve a secure and stable Somalia through an inclusive Somali-owned peace process. The frank and open discussions held in Asmara, Eritrea, during the past few weeks between the President of Eritrea and high officials of the United Nations is part of Eritrea's genuine desire to bring an end to the sufferings of the Somali people.

I would be most grateful if you could circulate the present letter and its annex as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Araya **Desta**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 17 September 2010 from the Permanent Representative of Eritrea to the United Nations addressed to the President of the Security Council

Ethiopia: Endless Campaign of Disinformation

In the last issue of its bulletin, "Week in the Horn", the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ethiopia falsely alleges that Eritrea provided "a plane load of weapons and medical supplies to Al-Shabaab in Kismayo ... at the same time as President Isaias was talking to Mr. Pascoe (the United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs) and Ambassador Mahiga" (the Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Somalia). The statement goes further to claim: "About 30 wounded Al-Shabaab fighters, including five foreigners, were then loaded onto the plane and flown back to Asmara ... An Eritrean official who flew down from Asmara in the plane also travelled to Afgoye to meet with Sheik Aweys." To give a semblance of "credence" to these preposterous accusations, the Ministry attributes the story to anonymous "sources close to Al-Shabaab".

This is not the first time that the Foreign Ministry's weekly bulletin is peddling propaganda against Eritrea. For reasons better known to Ethiopia, the misinformation campaign seems to have increased in the past few weeks with a litany of lopsided editorials on the well-known rulings of the Eritrea-Ethiopia Boundary Commission, the Qatar mediation process, as well as innuendos and outright lies on the visits of foreign dignitaries to Eritrea. Dignifying these malicious distortions and/or groundless accusations with responses will not serve any purpose and Eritrea has not bothered to address them.

The timing and intent behind this "Al-Shabaab" story has, however, two dimensions that must be addressed to put the record straight. Ethiopia's Foreign Ministry has fabricated this story this week precisely in order to misinform and wrongly influence the Somalia Monitoring Group that is touring the Horn of Africa region and that arrived in Asmara on 12 September. The other probable reason might have to do with Ethiopia's desire and pending plans to intervene again in Somalia. Indeed, when Ethiopia invaded Somalia in December 2006, to oust the Union of Islamic Courts (UIC) of the same Sheik Sherif who was then accused of extremism and is now embraced as "moderate", one of the pretexts it peddled was Eritrea's deployment in Somalia of 2,000 troops. Unfortunately, this total fabrication was not properly verified at the time and recycled as truth even by the Somalia Monitoring Group. We see now the same tape being played again.

In conclusion, as Eritrea has repeatedly explained, the crisis in Somalia can only be solved through an all-inclusive political peace process. Ethiopia's repeated and failed invasions of Somalia and other political machinations to keep Somalia weak and fragmented have not only proven futile but become a source of the problem rather than its solution.